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Special envoy approved by U.S. House

WASHINGTON (BP) — The U.S. House of Representatives has passed legislation to establish a special envoy for the promotion of religious freedom in such countries as Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, and Pakistan.

On July 29, House members voted 402-20 for the Near East and South Central Asia Religious Freedom Act, H.R. 440. All 20 "no" votes came from Republicans.

The bill, endorsed by the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and a variety of other organizations, would create a post in the State Department for a special envoy to protect the rights of religious minorities in the Near East and South Central Asia.

The U.S. Senate has yet to vote on the proposal.

Dept. of Justice targeting marriage act

WASHINGTON, D.C. (BP) — In a landmark legal brief, the U.S. Department of Justice argues that homosexuals exhibit immutable characteristics, have suffered a history of discrimination, and that the federal government's marriage law is driven by prejudice.

The legal brief, called a watershed moment by gay groups, seeks to have only part of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) overturned, but its legal reasoning goes much further. The same legal arguments have been used in successful state court lawsuits to legalize same sex marriage. If adopted by a federal court, the arguments eventually could be used in overturning not just all of DOMA but also the traditional marriage laws in the 44 states that do not recognize same sex marriage.

"[G]ay and lesbian individuals have suffered a long and significant history of purposeful discrimination," the department's brief states, pointing to death penalty laws going back to Colonial times but also including current-day laws defining marriage in the traditional sense.

The Justice Department's legal role is to defend the nation's laws, but U.S. President Barack Obama, a Democrat, has ordered the department to stop defending the 15-year-old law in court.

The House of Representatives has filled the void by hiring its own attorney.

The law has two primary functions. It defines marriage for federal purposes as between a man and a woman, and gives states the option of not recognizing another state's same sex marriages.

The Justice Department's brief, filed July 1 in a district court within the Ninth Circuit, sides with a lesbian woman who filed suit to have the part of the law dealing with the federal definition of marriage overturned. She is a staff attorney within the Ninth Circuit who wants her partner to receive legal benefits. They received a marriage license in California before Proposition 8 passed.

The Justice Department's arguments, while only targeting one segment of DOMA that would not directly impact state laws, could be used later to target those laws.

"If a federal court finds these persuasive for purposes of interpreting a federal statute, then when it comes to interpreting a state constitutional amendment [defining marriage], they'll have the exact same analysis," Daniel Blomberg, an attorney with the Alliance Defense Fund told Baptist Press.

"It will be identical. The government's argument here could certainly be used to strike down not only all of DOMA but to force this definition on all of the states."

"What is uncommon about this is the fact that the Justice Department has signed on in such a vocal manner to what even proponents of this perspective are saying is a quote-unquote, gay rights manifesto," he said.

Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest homosexual organization, called the brief a "watershed moment in the fight for LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) equality."



TRADITIONAL PROTEST — A couple supportive of California's Prop 8 protests outside the San Francisco courtroom building last year where a federal judge overturned the amendment, which defines marriage in the state by the traditional standard as between one man and one woman. The battle for the survival of traditional marriage was opened on another front this week when the U.S. Department of Justice filed a legal brief in support of striking down portions of the federal Defense of Marriage Act. U.S. President Barack Obama, a Democrat, had previously ordered the Department of Justice to cease defending the Defense of Marriage Act, even though the department has a legal obligation to do so. (BP photo)

Tara Borelli, attorney with Lambda Legal, a gay group, called it an "historic shift with enormous significance."

Every presidential administration until the current one defended DOMA, and the Obama administration did so, tepidly, until this year.

The 24-page document broke new ground for the Justice Department by arguing that discrimination based on sexual orientation should be subject to what is called "heightened scrutiny," a legal term that, if accepted by a federal court, would make it tougher to uphold the 1996 law.

For heightened scrutiny to apply to gays, a four-part threshold would have to be met. It would have to be proven that homosexuals have suffered a history of discrimination, exhibit immutable characteristics, are a minority or politically powerless, and that the Defense of Marriage Act has no legitimate policy objective.

The Justice Department contends that gays meet all four standards.

The Alliance Defense Fund and others who support DOMA argue that the law should be subject to what is called "rational basis," which holds that as long as the

"The government's argument here could certainly be used to strike down not only all of [the Defense of Marriage Act] but to force this definition on all of the states."

— Daniel Blomberg
attorney
Alliance Defense Fund

legislature had a rational reason for passing the law, it can stand. Under rational basis, the court begins with a presumption that the law is valid. Generally, under "heightened scrutiny," the opposite is true.

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals previously has held that sexual orientation should not be held to heightened scrutiny. That holding is binding on the current case.

Heightened scrutiny is a much more difficult standard to pass," Blomberg said. "Even if DOMA was subjected to heightened

scrutiny, frankly it should pass. We're talking about a law that enshrines the definition of marriage that has been true throughout American history and really throughout all of human history. So there's nothing about it that should be subject to heightened review concerns."

The Justice Department lists a series of instances of discrimination against gays, including a period in the 1900s when homosexuals were not eligible for federal jobs. It then goes on to argue that same-sex couples have "limited political power" and, as an example, it mentions the "political backlashes against same sex marriage."

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Who's protecting the children?

It's always sad to hear of the news of another child abused at the hands of trusted adults. It's infinitely sadder when the abuse occurs in church — yea, even Southern Baptist churches. With a spate of reports about child sexual abuse in some of churches, we are once again reminded not only of our legal responsibilities in this area but more importantly, what Jesus had to say about His precious little ones:

Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." (Matthew 19:14 NIV)

And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. (Mark 9:42 NIV)

We need to heed those strong words delivered loud and clear by our Lord and Savior. Unfortunately, that's not always the case even in our own ranks.

In June of 2006, a former Southern Baptist youth minister already serving 10 years for molesting a boy in Kentucky was charged with 25 additional sex-related offenses he allegedly committed while serving on the staff of a Southern Baptist

church in Missouri. The crimes with which Shawn Davies, age 33, has been charged are simply too perverse to list in a family newspaper such as The Baptist Record.

Shortly before Thanksgiving 2006, Larry Reynolds, pastor of Southmont Church in Denton, Texas, admitted to "a terrible mistake" and resigned. "I confess that proper boundaries were not kept," he said in a statement to church members.

According to news media reports, a civil lawsuit has been settled that accused Reynolds, age 59 at the time, of having a five-year sexual relationship with a girl he was counseling that began when the girl was 15 years old. The Texas statute of limitations has expired on criminal charges.

The sordid story of another Denton-area pastor has also come to light. Dale "Dickie" Amyx, pastor of Bolivar Church in nearby Sanger, admitted that he paid child support for nine years and is currently embroiled in a civil lawsuit with the child's mother in which she alleges that Amyx began molesting her during counseling sessions when she was 14 years old.

"I hated it, that it happened," Amyx confessed in a sworn deposition that is public record. "I told her many times I never meant to hurt her, and if I did, I'm sorry. And she always said it was OK."

The lawsuit also alleges that Amyx threatened the teen with guns and knives to keep her silent, and stalked her even as she moved several times to avoid him.

Closer to home, calls for the resignation of Steve Gaines, senior pastor of Bellevue Church in Cordova, Tennessee, were heard

when details emerged about his knowledge of alleged child sexual abuse involving one of the church's ministers that began 17 years ago, his delay in taking decisive action for six months, and his failure to notify authorities under state law.

Paul Williams, a 34-year Bellevue staffer, was finally dismissed after a special investigative committee issued a scathing report about the handling of the matter.

"Starting with Paul, there appears to have been no serious consideration given by anyone to the health and safety of the Bellevue family," the committee report states. "On Paul's part, there appears to never have been any time in seventeen years that any consideration was given to the effect that having a child molester on the ministerial staff of Bellevue Baptist Church would have on the church."

These are not lurid stories from some faraway denomination or cult with which we have scant contact and little doctrine in common. These are our churches, and our children.

What are the chances that similar outrages are occurring in Mississippi Baptist churches? It may not be widespread, but just do the math.

Even one case of child abuse in one of our churches is too many. In addition to the personal damage done to the child, the church will have little chance to regain its hard-fought reputation or recover from the legal ramifications.

Let's get serious about protecting the children entrusted to our churches. After all, we have it on pretty good authority that it's the right thing to do.

GUEST OPINION:

Technology helps us study Bible

By Aaron Linne
Nashville

text. The hypothesis was that the enriched text would create a better experience for the readers, but the study found something different:

"Hypertext readers again reported greater confusion following the text, and their comments about the story's plot and imagery were less detailed and less precise than those of the linear-text readers. With hypertext, the researchers concluded, 'the absorbed and personal mode of reading seems to be discouraged.' The readers' attention 'was directed toward the machinery of the hypertext and its functions rather than to the experience offered by the story. The medium used to present the words obscured the meaning of the words.'"

The challenge is to find a way to enable the modern features and familiarity of the web to enhance biblical study, not distract or overpower. As a part of the leadership team for MyStudyBible.com, the question was asked, "What if

we take the need for data mining away, and let the discovery of relevant content happen naturally? What if, instead of jumping around the page to search and hitting the back button when you found the wrong thing, what if you always knew you found the right thing first?"

At MyStudyBible.com, the default study space is divided into two sections — the main reading pane and the cross reference pane. In the main reading pane, a reader can travel through the biblical text at their own pace, reading verse-by-verse in a linear fashion, but on the right hand side keeping constantly updated with what's being read are a series of content tools that update to show additional content that references the reading location.

If the user is on John 3:16, off to the side of the reading pane will be a deep list of content that can help further explain the verse. The user gets to preview the content

before ever opening it. When something needs more explanation, a glance can show how much deeper all the content can go.

By presenting not just the biblical text, but also a targeted, intentional, and ever-adapting next layer of content, digital study tools like MyStudyBible.com become an exercise in enrichment, understanding, and discovery.

Learning is no longer about finding the right complementary text. It's about understanding and approaching all of the relevant texts.

Of course, MyStudyBible.com isn't the only digital Bible out there that can be used for deeper study. Software companies like WORDsearch, Logos, and BibleWorks have been building different ways of presenting and interacting with biblical content for years. I would encourage you to give them all a try, as each service has its own styles, pluses, and minuses. The key here is that there is a world of content out there, ready for deep experiences.

The Bible and oh-so-many things written to help understand it are literally a webpage and a keystroke away.

Linne is executive producer of digital marketing for the B&H Publishing Group of LifeWay.

Ruling approves deadly embryo research

WASHINGTON (BP) — A federal judge dismissed a legal challenge to government funding of embryonic stem cell research July 27, dealing an unsurprising setback to opponents of the lethal experimentation.

Royce Lamberth, chief judge of the District of Columbia District Court, ruled in the Obama administration's favor less than a year after suspending federal funding of embryonic stem cell research (ESCR). Lamberth's latest decision came after the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals removed his preliminary injunction on such grants.

In his new opinion, Lamberth said the appeals court's April decision "constrains this Court," forcing him to dismiss the lawsuit.

The case involved a challenge to U.S. President Barack Obama's 2009 executive order that overturned a more restrictive funding policy under his predecessor, President George W. Bush. Obama ordered the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to devise guidelines consistent with his decree.

In August of last year, Lamberth found the NIH guidelines violated a law that prohibits federal funds for research in which a human embryo is destroyed. The ability of stem cells to convert to other cells and tissues has provided great hope

for developing cures for various diseases, but extracting stem cells from an embryo results in the destruction of the days-old human being.

In September, an appeals court panel of three judges lifted Lamberth's suspension of ESCR funding while the case went forward. In a 2-1 decision in April, the panel returned the case to Lamberth but virtually killed the challenge.

Foes of federal funds for ESCR were disappointed but not shocked. "It's not Lamberth's fault, but once again, the Clintonesque public policy expediency technique is used to get around the law through the playing of semantics games," bioethics specialist Wesley Smith said on his blog.

"I wish I were surprised, but I predicted this very outcome late last year. The politics of this were always too white hot in our increasingly less principled country to permit a literal following of the clear purpose" of the law in question.

The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF), which helped represent non-embryonic stem cell researchers who brought the suit, said its lawyers and others are weighing their options for an appeal.

"Americans should not be forced to pay for experiments that destroy human life, have

produced no real-world treatments, and violate federal law," ADF senior counsel Steven Aden said in a written statement. "In these tough economic times, it makes no sense for the federal government to use taxpayer money for this illegal and unethical purpose."

The initial disagreement between Lamberth and the appeals court stemmed from the Obama administration's policy in light of an annual, spending bill rider known as the Dickey-Wicker Amendment. The U.S. senator in the bill's name is Mississippi Republican Roger Wicker.

First approved in 1996, Dickey-Wicker says federal funds are not to be used for "research in which a human embryo or embryos are destroyed, discarded, or knowingly subjected to risk of injury or death greater than that allowed for research on fetuses in utero" under a related law.

In his 2010 ruling, Lamberth rejected arguments by lawyers for the Obama administration that Dickey-Wicker is ambiguous and permits federal funding for research on stem cells after they have been removed from embryos.

The appeals court, however, agreed in its April opinion that Dickey-Wicker is ambiguous, saying although the law "bars funding for the destructive act of deriving an [embryonic stem cell] from an embryo, it does not prohibit funding a research project in which an [embryonic stem cell] will be used."

The word, "research," is flexible enough to describe either a discrete project or an extended process, the panel said. The appeals court's determination that the word research in the law is ambiguous binds him, Lamberth wrote in his 38-page opinion issued July 27.

Obama's March 2009 executive order overturned a prohibition instituted by Bush on federal funding of stem cell research that results in the destruction of embryos. Bush's 2001 order permitted grants for experiments on stem cell lines, or colonies, already in existence at the time of his action.

NIH's final guidelines, issued in July 2009, allowed funding for research on stem cells derived from embryos created by in vitro fertilization but not implanted. The embryos had to be donated by the parents who underwent the fertility treatments.

ESCR has fallen short of other forms of stem cell experimentation that do not harm the donor. It has yet to provide any treatments for human beings and has been plagued by tumors in lab animals. Research with adult stem cells and induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells has produced therapies for more than 70 afflictions and demonstrated promising results, respectively, without injuring donors.

Meanwhile, more than 150 human-animal hybrid embryos have been created in the last three years in British laboratories. The Daily Mail newspaper in London reported July 25. Pro-life advocates decried the news.

The newspaper reported 155 embryos that have genetic material from both human beings and animals have been created under a 2008 law passed by Parliament. The information was not revealed until a government minister provided it in response to a parliamentary question from David Alton, a crossbench member of the House of Lords in the British Parliament.

Crossbench members are not identified with political parties.

The hybrid embryos, which were created in three British labs, came in at least three forms, according to The Daily Mail:

— An animal egg fertilized by human sperm.

— A "cybrid" formed when a human nucleus is implanted in an animal cell.

— A chimera created when human cells and animal embryos are combined.

Researchers who back the creation of hybrids say they will provide embryonic stem cells for the treatment of an array of diseases. So far, however, only non-embryonic stem cells have produced treatments for maladies.

Harvesting embryonic stem cells destroys the embryo, while procuring non-embryonic cells does not do such harm to the donor.

Looking back

10 years ago

A "redirection of ministry" is taking place at LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, according to Bill Taylor, director of the Sunday School Group. "This is a total redirection of ministry," Taylor said.

20 years ago

God keeps His promise of protection, says 71-year-old Evelyn Graves. Graves, a member of Van Winkle Church, Jackson, recited the 23rd Psalm while burglars ransacked her home. She was not harmed during the incident.

50 years ago

Sunbeam Focus Week is Aug. 13 – 1, celebrating the group's 75th anniversary. The first Sunbeam Band was founded in 1886 by George Braxton Taylor and Anna L. Elsom in Fairmount, Virginia, predating the founding of WMU by two years.



THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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YOU CAN RESPOND
RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

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By Charles Marx, 1932 - 2004
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C S T Q S T H N G Q G J L ,
N S L O F J T R S N B .

E L D L F O N T G A G A L :
L T R S N

Clue: R = G

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: First Timothy One: Four

WE'RE NUMBER ONE

In Mississippi there are not a lot of times when we can cheer, "We are number one." For the past seven years in a row, we have been able to say — and sadly so — we are number one but not for a good thing. We are rated as the number one obese state in the nation. Now, I am not sure who goes to all of these states and puts everybody on a scale and evaluates their height, weight, and body fat, but apparently there are little silent and unseen workers who run around gathering all of this data. While our Southern eating habits are both a cultural delight and for many a sporting event in itself, we are at the top of the heap in obesity in Mississippi. The fact that we are the most overweight state in the nation has some immediate consequences that sit in the road just ahead.

It is an undeniable fact that health issues like diabetes, heart problems, joint, and muscular troubles are complicated by being overweight. Beyond those ever-growing enormous health concerns are the general restrictions that come to us, limiting participation and meaningful lifestyle activities because we are unable to get around. Mississippi leads the nation in a few things that are good. This is not one of them. Please understand that all of the news is not bad. There is an upside to our weighty problem.

First of all, our obesity may point to the fact that we have great cooks in Mississippi. I can attest to that, personally, having eaten in every corner, nook, and cranny of our state. In Mississippi, we have gracious Southern cooks who know how to make food taste delectable.

There may be someone who has eaten at more church dinners on the ground than I have, but I do not know who that person may be. I am reminded of one occasion when I was standing in line to get some food at a Sunday noon dinner and a pastor asked me, "How many of these do you have to do every year?" I said, "Have to do? None! But I get to do a lot of them." I have eaten in many other states with church groups and I have eaten with folks around the world who



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

have fixed meals, but nowhere was the food as good as that prepared by the caring hands of ladies and sometimes men in our Mississippi Baptist churches. That is really not a criticism of other folks, but it is a celebration of our wonderful culinary excellence. Delicious, well-prepared dishes make it hard to put a fork down. Our position at the top of the obesity ratings in part is accomplished because we do our job too well.

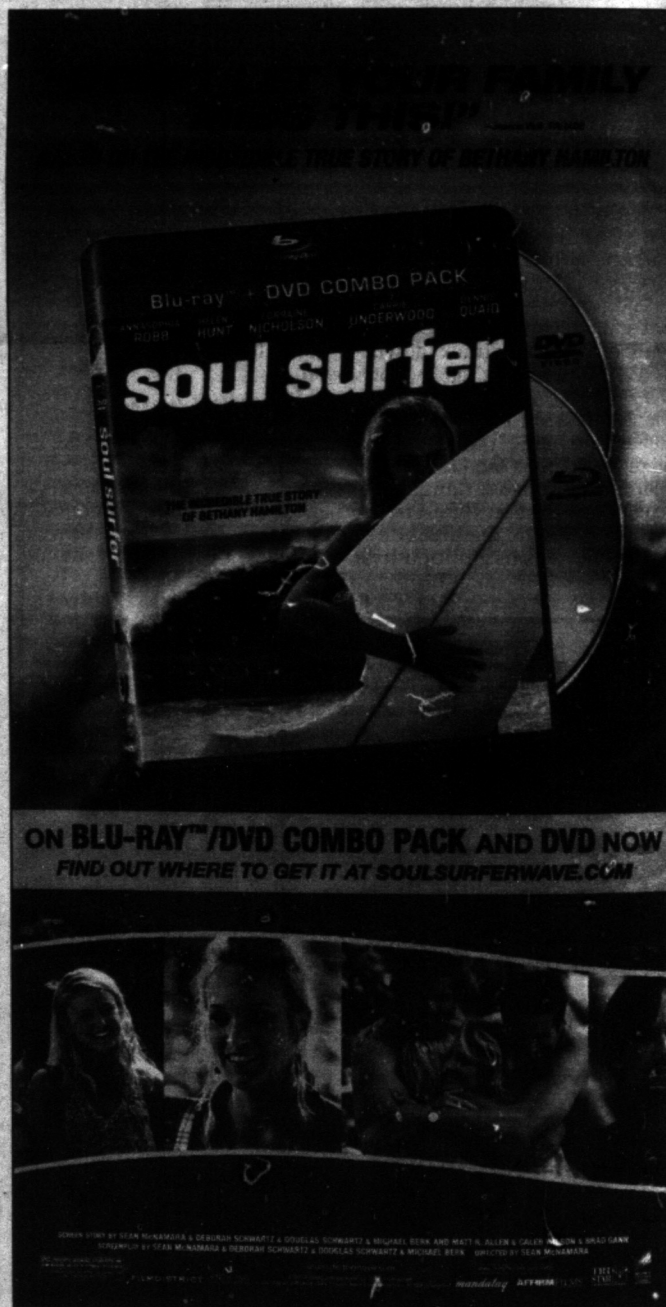
The second good thing is that we can do something about the situation. Forget about the government starting a new program that will cost billions of dollars. Stop worrying about some new plan, silver bullet, or golden pill that you can take and lose all your excess weight. We can stop eating so much. Any nutritionist or doctor can tell you that in the main the balance of whether or not you are overweight depends on the calories you take in and the calories you burn up. If you take in more than you expend, you are going to gain weight. If you take in less than you burn, you are going to lose weight.

Some years ago I visited Auschwitz, one of Hitler's main killing camps. Throughout the camp were pictures of men and women who had been brought there to eventually be exterminated. Of all the single or group pictures that I saw of the people at the camp, none were obese. I am fully aware of the fact that they gave them a minimal amount to eat and that nobody, them or us, would want to live in those conditions. The point is that if you stop eating too much you begin to lose more weight. We can do something about this.

The third most important fact is that reduction of our weight as individuals and as a society can be a spiritual exercise. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and very house of our God, and

He wants to live within us. If our eating is harming our ability to function, it would be good to give attention to letting God help us to bless and rebuild the house. I know that it is not an easy thing to do and that is why it can become so spiritually charged. We need the Lord to help us to resist the kind of food that ruins us and the amount of intake that hurts us. I believe that there are enough Christians in Mississippi that if we would allow our eating and exercising, control and management of what we eat and drink,

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and what we turn away to be guided by God, that we as one single group could make a difference in lowering our obese position among the states. God can help us and He will help us as we listen to Him and look to Him.

All of us have watched over the past year and listened to all of the constant drum beating of the rhetoric about healthcare. We spend hours talking about the government plan that is so expensive and possibly unsustainable. We fuss and bellyache about all of the problems related to health issues, then we choose to do nothing about our own manageable health problems. I would challenge all of us to ask God to give us not only wisdom but grace and power to do what needs to be done so that we might bless the temple of God that is our body.

Dirty TV could see increase if policy is overturned

WASHINGTON (BP) — The stream of profanity and nudity on broadcast television could soon become a flood if the U.S. Supreme Court finds the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) indecency policy "unconstitutionally vague" during its next session, according to the Parents Television Council (PTC). "If there's no rule against [foul language or nudity] then it stands to reason that there's going to be more of it," said Dan Isett, PTC director of public policy, regarding the possible end of the FCC's indecency policy.

The upcoming case follows the Supreme Court's decision in April 2009 that sided with the FCC and conservative groups in supporting the FCC's authority to prohibit certain indecent language on broadcast television. However, that case only examined whether the FCC had violated federal statutes and did not deal with the constitutionality of the regulations.

When the Supreme Court narrowly upheld the FCC's policy, Justice Clarence Thomas — one of the more conservative judges who voted with the majority — wrote that he might rule against the FCC in a future case if it involved First Amendment issues.

In July 2010, those First Amendment issues were examined and the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals struck down the FCC's indecency policy for failing to give broadcasters fair warning of what they were not allowed to air. The Second Circuit ruled that the standards regarding offensive language were "unconstitutionally vague."

The case regarding the indecency policy's constitutionality

was appealed to the Supreme Court, which announced at the end of its term in April that it would consider whether or not the FCC's indecency policy violates the First or Fifth Amendment.

The upcoming case will deal with both the fleeting expletives from the 2002 and 2003 Billboard Music Awards, which aired on Fox, and an episode of NYPD Blue in 2003 aired on ABC where a woman was shown partially nude.

Isett said he saw no violations to the First Amendment in the FCC's policy because broadcasters can air indecent material as long as it is after 10 p.m., a time when conventional thought holds that most children are safely tucked into bed.

However, if the FCC's indecency policy is found unconstitutional in the fall, Isett said, broadcasters will have no limits on airing profanity, nudity and other indecent material. "ABC could legally become HBO," Isett told Baptist Press.

Isett was referring to Home Box Office, a cable pay channel that has no limits on nudity, sexual content, profanity, and perversion.

Families who want to keep their children away from vulgar material do have another option, said Dwayne Hastings, vice president at the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville. He suggests families

eliminate television from their lives entirely and return to more wholesome forms of entertainment.

"No matter which way the court rules, there is great value for parents and children alike to turn off the television, put away the video games, and open a good book or their Kindle and refuse to let Hollywood hijack their entertainment options," Hastings said.

Protecting children from inappropriate material goes beyond the entertainment parents allow, Hastings said. Parents should be active, informed voters because the people who lead

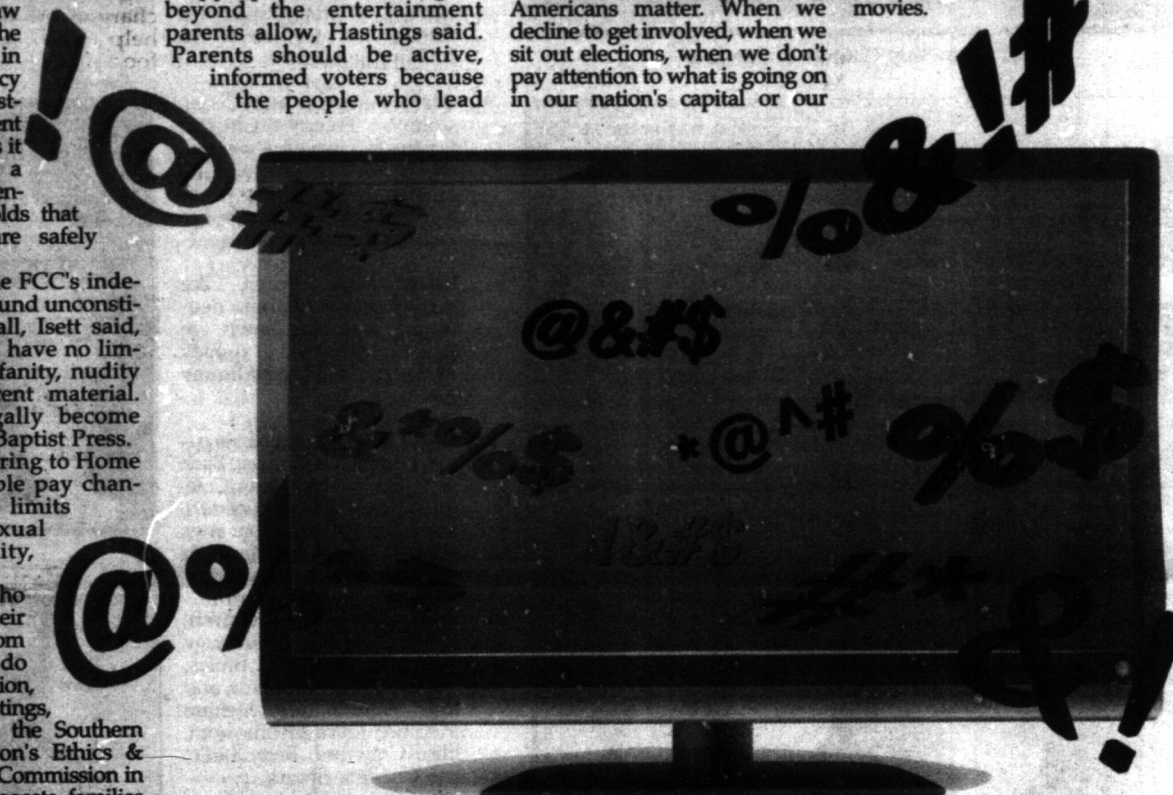
the government shape America's future — including the nation's entertainment industry.

"While we should not place our hope in our government or those in Washington, we ought to appreciate the reality that without Christ-followers engaging in local, state, and national civic affairs, our society will continue to slide further and further into a darkened state," Hastings said.

The votes of Bible-believing Americans matter. When we decline to get involved, when we sit out elections, when we don't pay attention to what is going on in our nation's capital or our

states' capitals, we can be assured that families will pay the price for a long time to come."

The influx in TV profanity has resulted in some companies creating products to assist parents. One company, TVGuardian, sells a device that mutes foul language on television. Another company, ClearPlay, sells a DVD player that mutes bad language and also skips objectionable scenes in DVD movies.



MS Music Leadership Training School now open for enrollment

JACKSON, Ms. (Special) — August begins the first of eight courses at seven locations in Mississippi sponsored by the

Church Music Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, in cooperation with the Providence Learning Center of New Orleans Seminary.

The first course, Song Leading, will meet once a week for two hours for eight consecutive weeks at the following locations and times:

— First Church, Lyman, beginning August 16 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). Louis White, teacher (228) 832-2159.

— Northcrest Church, Meridian, beginning August 15 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). Buddy McElroy, teacher, (601) 938-8668.

— First Church, Cleveland, beginning August 16 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). Alan Berry, teacher (662) 843-2701.

— Easthaven Church, Brookhaven, beginning

August 22 (7-9 p.m.). Mark Hamilton, teacher (601) 894-5848.

— First Church, Starkville, beginning August 22 (6:00-8:00 p.m.). Tom Jenkins, teacher (662) 323-5633.

— First Church, Booneville, beginning August 16 (6:30-8:30 p.m.). LuAnne Ford, teacher (662) 728-6272.

— Broadmoor Church, Madison, beginning August 15 (6:00-8:00 p.m.). Jimmy McCaleb, teacher (601) 924-1233.

The eight courses are Song Leading; Worship Planning; Reading Music; Rhythm/Pitch; Reading Music; Harmony/Melody; Hymnology; Music Administration/Staff Relations; Survey of Church Music Resources; and Class Voice.

These courses are designed to provide basic training for bivocational music directors and other music leaders in churches. The eight courses meet two hours per week. Each course is eight weeks in length.

The cycle of courses is scheduled over a two-year period. Each course is independent and has no prerequisite. Each

class must have a minimum of six students enrolled for the class to start. Each student who completes the eight courses earns a certificate from the Providence Learning Center of New Orleans Seminary.

There is a one-time enrollment fee of \$25.00. The cost of each course is \$125.00. A \$60.00 scholarship is available for all first-time students. Students already enrolled are not eligible. The grant is limited to one person per church.

For more information, contact the teachers listed above for each location, or Jimmy McCaleb in the Church Music Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. E-mail: mcaleb@cabin-view.net. Telephone: (601) 292-3273 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651.

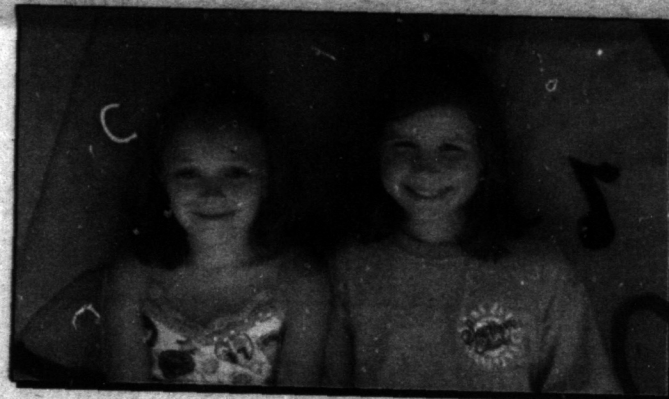
JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. Fellowship Church, Taylorsville



2. New Hope Church, Foxworth



3. Patterson and Collier

1. Fellowship Church, Taylorsville, held a flag folding ceremony in which each fold was explained. Shown folding the flag are Bill Temple and Daniel Hester. Also shown are Don Chennault and Charles Yelverton.

2. New Hope Church, Foxworth, recently dedicated their new parsonage. The home houses pastor Tim and Brenda Parker, and their children, Haleigh and Joshua. Shown are the pastor, his family, and members of the building committee.

3. Alana Patterson and Carley Collier, Freeny Church, Carthage, enjoyed a week at the Missions Camp for Girls at Garaywa Camp and Conference Center. Shown are the two participants.

4. Silver Creek Church, Pike Association, held a baby dedication recently. Shown are Jason McKenzie, Ashley McKenzie, and pastor Jimmy Smith.

5. Oral Church, Sumrall, recognizes its Bible drillers. Back row: Eric Bennett, Bret Cole, Billie Ruth Barrett (leader), and Nate Hutson; front row, Hannah Hutson, Maranda Hutson, and Grace Hutson.

6. Pine Hill Church, Enterprise, held a giveaway June 23, sharing Bibles, clothes, household items, and toys. Shown are Melissa McClure, Joyce Mooneyham, Elise Crawford, Betty Little, and Charlene Speed.

7. Rock Hill Church, Mt. Olive, will have a recognition service for Charlie and Debbie Cone for 30 years of music ministry Aug. 14, 10:30 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds. Nelson Crozier, pastor.



4. Silver Creek Church, Pike Association



5. Oral Church, Sumrall



6. Pine Hill Church, Enterprise

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



1. Calvary Church, Greenville

1. Calvary Church, Greenville: July 11 - 15; shown are the participants.

2. Ethel Church, Ethel: July 11 - 15; average attendance, 81; 34 helpers; three decisions to accept Christ; Carol Clark, director; Joey Barnard, pastor. Shown are the participants.



2. Ethel Church, Ethel

JUST FOR THE RECORD



3. River Bend Church, Aberdeen



4. Beasley ordination



6. Vaiden Church, Vaiden

1. First Church, Brandon, is hosting a Prayer Journey for Schools Sunday Aug. 7, 5 p.m., a self-directed prayer time for the 19-plus schools represented in the church family. Bring school supplies for the children who attend the Rankin County Learning Center. For information, call (601) 825-903.

2. Hopewell Church, Crystal Springs, is hosting The Singing Echoes in morning worship Aug. 14, 10:30 a.m.

3. Youth from River Bend Church, Aberdeen, attended Snowbird Wilderness Outfitters Youth Camp in Andrews, North Carolina recently. Shown are the participants.

4. East Pleasant Grove Church, Quitman, ordained Michael Beasley to the gospel ministry July 24. Shown are Jamie Matthews, Ray Files, Beasley, and Grady Crowell. Beasley has been called as pastor of Center Ridge Church, Clarke County.

6. The children and students of Vaiden Chjurch, Vaiden, held their own Bible drill camp July 7 - 9 at the church's family life center. Shown are the participants.

7. The GAs of Trinity Church, Amory, attended Mission Madness in New Albany in April. Shown are Ceira Stanley, Lexi Hood, Hannah McNeese, Tara Robinson, and Carleigh Goode.



7. Trinity Church, Amory



8. Silver Creek Church, McComb

8. Silver Creek Church, McComb, recently held a GA recognition. Shown, back row, are Rena Lesley, Tiffany Dewitt, and Sierra Martin; front row, Parris Brumfield and Katelynn Blackwell.

9. Edna Church, Columbia, recognized Julia Porter, shown, on Mother's Day as the oldest mother present.

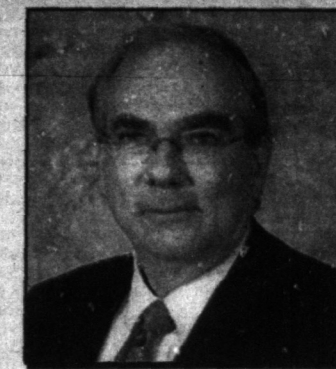


9. Porter

MISSISSIPPI BAPTISTS

COLLEGE NEWS

1. Mississippi College School of Law Dean Jim Rosenblatt received the 2011 Chief Justice Award. Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice Bill Waller, Jr. announced the award for Rosenblatt at the Mississippi Bar convention in Sandestin, Florida on July 16. The award salutes individuals who have worked hard to improve the judicial system. The MC Law dean shared the Chief Justice Award in 2006.



1. Rosenblatt

REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

1. Rock Bluff Church, Daniel Community: Homecoming, Aug. 7; services, 11 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds; Paul Roberts, speaker; Shelly Overby, music; Donnie Stuart, pastor.

2. Liberty Church, Pontotoc: Revival, Aug. 14 - 17; Kermit McGregor, speaker; Homecoming, Aug. 21, 10:30 a.m.; Bobby Cossey, speaker; Harvey Sewell, pastor.

3. Meadville Church, Meadville: Revival, Aug. 7 - 10; Sun., 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Joey Faulk, speaker; Ken Hedgepeth, music; Johnny Bowlin, pastor.

4. Doty Springs Church, Attala County: Revival, Aug. 20 - 24; Sat., youth night; Sun., 10:45 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Wayne Hudson, speaker; Larry Odom, pastor.

5. Liberty Church, Liberty: Revival, Aug. 21 - 24; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., noon (lunch provided) and 7 p.m.; Greg Warnock, speaker; Clint Nichols, worship leader.

6. Concord Church, Choctaw: Homecoming, Aug. 14; Bill Taylor, speaker; revival, Aug. 15 - 17, 7 p.m.; Danny Irvin, speaker; Roger Griffith, pastor.

STATE SOFTBALL RESULTS

Men's AAA Mississippi State Softball Tournament winners

- 1st Place — First, Hattiesburg**
Back L-R: Chuck McRaney, Clint Rayborn, Tim Shanks, Todd Shoultz, Bear Wood, Dan Clanton, Jarred Green, Eric Manlick
Front L-R: Colby Stewart, Daniel Covington, Charlie Barnes, Kendall Smith, Clai Meador
- 2nd Place — Broadmoor Church #2, Madison**
Back L-R: Brian Senn, Kurt Welch, CJ Johnson,
- 3rd Place — First, Natchez**
Back L-R: Jamie Tyson, Bryce Murray, Jamie Robinson, David New, Russell Cook, Jay Geter, Jay Massey, Chad Johnson, Shane French
Front L-R: Raymond Gill, Jody Smith, Sam Whittington, Jimmy Allgood, William Barnes



1. First place — Hattiesburg



2. Second place — Broadmoor



3. Third place — Natchez

REVIVALS AND HOMECOMINGS

- Magee's Creek Church, Jayess:** Homecoming, Aug. 14; fellowship, 10 a.m., followed by worship, dinner on the grounds, and afternoon singing; Dale Sauls, speaker; Gloryland, music.
- Mt. Zion Church, Leake County:** Homecoming and cemetery memorial day, Aug. 7; services, 10 a.m., followed by covered dish luncheon; Scott Vaughn, speaker; Tommy Jones, music; Wayne McGee, pastor.
- Little Bahala Church, Lincoln County:** Homecoming, Aug. 14 - 17; Sun., Sunday School, 10 a.m.; service, 11 a.m., followed by lunch; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Britt Williamson, speaker; Dale Heard and Sharon King, music; Douglas Clark, pastor.
- Calvary Church, Canton:** Revival, Aug. 7 - 10; Sun., 10:30 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; fellowship after Wed. service; Bruce Cappelman, speaker; Scott Jones, music; Tom Rayburn, pastor.
- Hamburg Church, Roxie:** Homecoming and revival, Aug. 28 - 31; Sun., Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by lunch and afternoon singing; Mon. - Wed., covered dish, 6 p.m.; services, 7 p.m.; Ernest Sadler, speaker; Jimmy Bilbo, music; Mary Cupit, pianist.

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MS POSITIONS

MAGNOLIA BAPTIST CHURCH IN LAUREL, MS IS IN NEED OF A PART TIME MINISTER OF STUDENTS. We are accepting resumes through the end of August. Please send resume to: Magnolia Baptist Church, 1040 Wansley Rd, Laurel, MS 39400.

NEW PROSPECT BAPTIST CHURCH IN IUKA, MS IS ASKING GOD FOR A BIVOCATIONAL WORSHIP LEADER. Call 662-423-3030 or e-mail Doug4Him@juno.com Doug Christy, Pastor

NEW PROSPECT BAPTIST CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, MS IS SEEKING A BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR. Please see www.newprospectbc.net for details. Send resume to New Prospect Baptist Church Attn: Music Search Committee, 691 Hwy. 84, Brookhaven, MS 39601.

THE STUDENT MINISTER SEARCH COMMITTEE AT STAR BAPTIST CHURCH IS NOW ACCEPTING RESUMES FOR A FULL-TIME STUDENT MINISTER. This person will be responsible for leading a comprehensive program for children & youth. To request a job description, contact the church office at 601-845-2736. Please email resumes to starbaptistresumes@gmail.com.

CHALYBEATE BAPTIST CHURCH IN WALNUT, MS IS SEEKING A PART-TIME SONG LEADER. Interested candidates need to submit a resume to chalybeatebaptist@gmail.com or call 662-730-4120.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, NEW ALBANY, MS IS SEEKING TO FILL THE ORGANIST POSITION. Please contact the church office at 662-534-5812, if you are interested.

THRASHER BAPTIST CHURCH IN PRENTISS COUNTY IS SEEKING A BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC MINISTER. Resumes can be submitted to Music Minister Search Committee, 200 CR 1040, Booneville, MS 38829 or emailed to dougrakestraw@yahoo.com.

JUNIPER GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH IS SEEKING A PART-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC. Resumes can be emailed to junipergrovebc@gmail.com or mailed to 289 Juniper Grove Road, Poplarville, MS 39470. For more information please call 601-795-8866.

NEW SIGHT BAPTIST CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, MS IS SEEKING A BIVOCATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR. Send resumes to: Charlotte Newell, 1017 Common Street, Wesson, Ms. 39191 or email to wanchar2353@att.net.

Abortion drugs may be covered under federal law

WASHINGTON (BP) — Health insurance plans will be required to provide no-cost coverage of contraceptives, including drugs that can cause abortions, under a recommendation made to the federal government July 19.

Drugs with abortion-inducing properties, such as "ella" and the emergency contraceptive Plan B, would be considered preventive services for women under last year's health-care reform law if the suggestion is accepted by Kathleen Sebelius, secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Those drugs and all birth control methods approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) would be included in a range of services offered to patients free of charge under guidelines from an Institute of Medicine committee.

Sebelius appeared to indicate her enthusiastic support for the panel's recommendations. According to The Washington Post, she called the report "historic," adding the recommendations are "based on science and existing literature."

Emergency contraception, also known as the "morning-after" pill, is basically a heavy dose of birth control pills. While the two-step process can restrict ovulation in a woman or prevent fertilization, it also can prevent implantation of the early embryo in the uterine wall. The latter effect would cause an abortion, pro-life advocates point out.

"Ella," though approved as emergency contraception by the FDA in 2010, is more closely related to the abortion drug RU 486, according to pro-life organizations. Like RU 486, it blocks production of the hormone progesterone, destroy-

ing the placenta that provides nutrition to the embryo and causing the tiny, unborn child's death, the American Association of Pro-life Obstetricians and Gynecologists says.

Pro-life advocates decried the recommendations. "Yet another untruth about Obamacare has been uncovered," said Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, referring to the 2010 health-care law.

"President Obama promised the new health-care program would not cover abortions. Now, we see that a panel solicited for input by HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius has recommended mandatory coverage for 'emergency contraception,' which is a euphemism for the morning-after pill, which often kills a newly conceived child by not allowing the embryo to implant on the wall of the mother's womb."

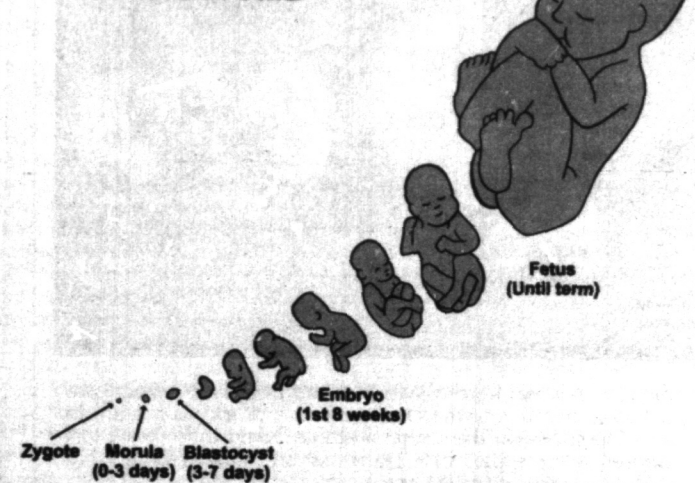
Jeanne Monahan, director of the Family Research Council's Center for Human Dignity, said in a written statement, "If HHS includes these mandates, the conscience rights of millions of Americans will be violated, including issuers of plans, providers who contract with such plans, and Americans who will pay for the costs of these services. HHS should focus on items and services that prevent actual diseases,

and not include controversial services just to placate the abortion industry."

Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, a pro-life spokesman for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, pointed out in a written release the committee's report says it would have a basis for urging mandatory coverage of surgical abortions also if it would not violate the law.

"Most Americans surely see that abortion is not healthy or therapeutic for unborn children, and has physical and mental health risks for women which can be extremely serious," DiNardo said. "I can only conclude that there is an ideology at work in these recommendations that goes beyond any objective assessment of

BIOLOGICAL LIFE IN THE WOMB



the health needs of women and children."

Two of the country's leading abortion rights organizations, NARAL Pro-choice America and Planned Parenthood, applauded the recommendations.

"As someone who has worked on women's rights for nearly 30 years, I can say that today's news marks one of the biggest advances for women's health in a generation," NARAL President Nancy Keenan said in a written statement.

She said NARAL is confident the Obama administration "will adopt the IOM's science-based recommendation and make affordable contraception a reality for all women."

at the moment of conception, not implantation (Jeremiah 1:5, Psalm 139:13-16, Psalm 51:5). The use of taxpayers' money to fund killing such babies is an abomination."

Under the regimen for morning-after pills, a woman takes a pill within 72 hours of sexual intercourse and another dose 12 hours later. Another "morning-after" pill, Plan B One-step, can be taken in a single dose within 72 hours.

The Institute of Medicine committee also recommended health plans cover such services as counseling to prevent unintended pregnancies, testing for human papillomavirus for women over 30 years of age, screening for HIV, and counseling on sexually transmitted infections.

Lawsuit filed to stop legalization of same sex marriage in NY state

ALBANY, N.Y. (BP) — One day after a New York law legalizing same sex marriage went into effect, a traditional marriage group filed suit in state court seeking to overturn the law, claiming that the Senate violated the state constitution as well as open meetings laws in passing it.

The suit, filed by Liberty Counsel on behalf of New Yorkers for Constitutional Freedoms, makes a series of allegations — among them an alleged failure by the Senate to provide a constitutionally mandated three-day review period before passing the law. The constitution allows a bill

to pass without such a review period if the governor issues a "message of necessity," — which Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo did, but Liberty Counsel says in its 14-page suit that "there was no pressing state need."

The suit was filed against the Republican-led Senate, the New York State Department of Health, and New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman.

The law passed the Senate June 24 in the final minutes of the legislative session. Both sides agree that it passed in a frenzy, but they disagree whether state law was violated.

"New York law requires that the government be open and transparent to keep political officials responsible," Mathew Staver, chairman of Liberty Counsel, said in a statement. "When government operates in secret and freezes out the very people it is supposed to represent, the entire system fails."

"The back-room tactics were rampant in the passages of this law. The law should be set aside and the process should begin again to allow the people a voice in the process." Among the other allegations:

- closed meetings that vio-

lated New York's open meetings laws.

- suspension of Senate procedures to prevent those who opposed the bill from speaking.

- failure to follow Senate procedures that require a bill must be sent to appropriate committees prior to being placed before the full Senate for a vote.

- rule changes on the Senate floor to prevent debate on the bill.

The suit asks the court to overturn the law and void all marriage licenses that were issued to same-sex couples.

Cuomo spokesman Josh Vlasto told Bloomberg news

service that the "plaintiffs lack a basic understanding of the laws of the state of New York."

"The suit is without merit," Vlasto said.

Jason McGuire, executive director of New Yorkers for Constitutional Freedoms, disagreed.

"Constitutional liberties were violated," he said in a statement. "Today we are asking the court to intervene in its rightful role as the check and balance on an out-of-control State Legislature."

New York became the sixth U.S. state and easily the largest in the country to redefine marriage.



SHINING THROUGH — Stephanie Cox, shown here playing for the Boston Breakers professional women's soccer team, was also a member of the U.S. Women's World Cup team in Germany. Cox, one of the most visible Christians on the team, said that "even though we lost [in the finals to Japan], I feel so honored to be a part of a team that so many people were watching and so many people were taking notice of." (BP photo)

Women's World Cup participant keeps faith despite hectic career

BOSTON (BP) — U.S. team member Stephanie Cox spent much of her time on the bench at the Women's World Cup in Germany.

The lack of playing time — she played in two of the team's six games, for a total of 67 minutes — was frustrating but it also served as a reminder to Cox of her responsibility to her teammates, no matter how much she was on the field.

Cox, a defender, began to see that "God has me there for a bigger purpose than for me to excel at my sport, or just wins and losses. It's more about the effect I can have on my teammates. My responsibility is to show them Christ."

Cox said she tried to cheer loudly for her teammates, supporting them and encouraging them, in persevering through the competition. In doing so, she hoped they could see her love for them — and Christ's love in her — shining through.

"Eternity's worth more than playing every game," Cox said.

A native of Elk Grove, Ca., Cox grew up in a Christian home and was a member of First Church there affiliated with the North American Baptist Conference. She made a profession of faith at a young age and took several mission trips with her family as a youth.

As she grew older and became more involved with soccer, Cox often struggled with figuring out how the sport could fit with her life as a Christian. She asked herself, "How could God use my role as a soccer player?"

She often felt during high school as if soccer competed with her relationship with the Lord. Her commitment to the sport often caused her to miss youth group events or other church activities, but when she began her college career at the University of Portland in Oregon she discovered something important about the connection between soccer and her faith.

"When I got to college, some other girls on the team were Christians, and I realized you could find a community of Christians wherever you are," said Cox, who plays professionally for the Boston Breakers. "I've been trying to seek after communities on my teams ever since. That's an encouragement to my faith and my relationship with God, because often you can't go to church on Sundays."

During her time in Germany as part of the U.S. team, Cox said she could see ways in which God was moving on her team. She and several Christian teammates often prayed for team unity, and Cox said they felt God bringing them together.

"We were just so grateful that He was writing a bigger story than we could have," Cox said.

They held regular Bible studies, and on one Sunday they gathered to sing worship songs and listen to an online sermon.

The tournament's outcome was heartbreaking for Cox and her teammates, who lost to Japan in the championship game, but Cox said the World Cup experience has given women's soccer more exposure — and given her and other Christian teammates a greater platform to talk about their relationship with Christ.

"Even though we lost, I feel so honored to be a part of a team that so many people were watching and so many people were taking notice of," Cox said.

"I almost feel like we won, in a way."

"Eternity's worth more than playing every game."

— Stephanie Cox
professional soccer player
member of the U.S.
Women's World Cup team

Texas educational board approves additional material

AUSTIN, Texas (BP) — The Texas State Board of Education has unanimously approved a list of supplemental science materials that appears to please proponents and critics of evolution alike.

The supplemental materials, offered by more than a dozen publishers, aim to bring science classes in Texas public schools up to date with standards the board passed in 2009.

The science standards have drawn national attention in requiring students to be able to "analyze, evaluate, and critique" all scientific theories.

The board's July 22 vote to approve the recommended texts, vetted by educator review panels and Texas Education Commissioner Robert Scott, followed a four-hour public hearing on Thursday that mostly pitted church-state watchdogs and evolutionary science advocates against those supportive of the board's requirements that all theories be scrutinized.

The supplemental materials cover general science for the fifth grade through middle school and secondary chemistry, physics, and biology, with biology attracting the most attention during the hearing July 21.

On Friday, the 15-member elected board voted 14-0 (with one absent) to approve the list of electronic supplements, with two biology textbook publishers agreeing to edit their material in select places to meet the board's approval.

Opposing factions in the debate over how evolution is presented in schools seemed to claim victory after the vote.

"It's great that there was a unanimous vote by the board to protect children and to not allow errors to go into classroom textbooks," said Jonathan Saenz, legislative director for the conservative Liberty Institute, based in Plano, Texas. "This was a total loss for the liberal left that wanted to protect these errors and allow them to stay in, while trying to bring in this bogeyman of Intelligent Design that never existed."

Steven Schafersman, director of Texas Citizens for Science and a vocal critic of intelligent design, said, "As a member of the scientific community I am very pleased with the results of the vote today. With the exception of the Holt McDougal materials, all of the science materials were adopted with only the legitimate factual errors changed. All in all, this was a victory for science and a victory for my side."

Two publishers of biology texts agreed to make changes beyond the list of routine cor-

rections requested by review panels. Adaptive Curriculum agreed to replace stylized versions of human and animal embryo drawings by 19th-century biologist Ernst Haeckel, whose early work is deemed outdated, with actual photos of embryo development.

Holt McDougal agreed, after some resistance, to offer changes in the language it employed in eight instances dealing with evolution concepts. The board agreed to adopt the text after passing a motion asking Scott, the education commissioner, to coordinate the changes with the publisher.

Much of the public hearing focused on perceptions that Intelligent Design concepts or biblical creationism would be forced into science materials. Among the 60 or so people who testified, a wide majority argued against any weakening of evolution instruction. More than one person equated critical analysis of evolution with opening the door for religious dogma, which was one too many for board member Ken Mercer.

An exasperated Mercer challenged anyone to find a mention of creationism, Intelligent Design, God, or Jesus in the proposed science texts. "It's just not there, period!" he exclaimed.

Mercer's statement didn't sway Rebecca Robertson of the American Civil Liberties Union of Texas, who warned the board that sneaking Intelligent Design concepts into science classes likely would lead to lawsuits against financially strapped school districts.

"We believe in leaving religious instruction to the parents and faith community of Texas. That's what our Constitution demands... The Supreme Court has made very clear that when government organizations like this one teach religious concepts like Intelligent Design or intelligent causation," they have crossed a line, she said.

Daniel Romo, professor of chemistry at Texas A&M University, said not all data proposed within the evolution model are settled science. For example, Romo said the study of abiogenesis — how life initially arose — is one area "where multiple sides of the evidence must be shown" and where "there is so much mystery and unknown in this area."

"The primary premise of my testimony is driven by my desire to ensure that outdated scientific experiments that are now widely accepted to have been performed under incorrect conditions be removed [from textbooks]," Romo said.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE Love One Another

John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:10b-12, 16-18; 4:7-13, 19

By Beth Bowman

This four lesson emphasis forces us to look at how we treat others. Our society promotes looking out for ourselves and our own interests. This is a sharp contrast to the example Jesus gave and the instructions He left for believers to follow.

John 13:34-35

Are you loving like Jesus?
Previously Jesus had reiterated to his disciples about the importance of keeping God's law. He had reminded them about the Ten Commandments and explained to them how to live to follow those commandments. Now he gives them a new commandment—love one another. This commandment was based on his life. He tells them to love one another as He had loved them. Wow. If we

stop and analyze that—we can get overwhelmed. The way Jesus loved was amazing—consistent, mature, selfless, unwavering. Jesus even told them in verse 35, "By this (love) all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." In other words, the world can tell that you are a disciple by the way you love others. Theologian David Gusik states, "Love is the mark of the fellowship of true believers, and all other criteria are strictly secondary." (blueletterbible.com)

1 John 3:10b-12; 16-18

Are you sacrificing like Jesus?

What Jesus did on the cross for us is the ultimate model of sacrificial love. The Bible teaches us to do the same. This is not our natural response. We are



Bowman

basically self-centered. We want what we want, when we want it. If you don't think you are, try giving up your prime parking space at the mall in the rain. Try staying after church on Sunday to clean up the sanctuary when you would rather be first in line for the buffet. We like taking care of ourselves. The loving response to consider others first is not a natural response. It is a deliberate one. It is one that is fed by studying God's word and maturing in our faith.

1 John 4:7-13; 19

Are you giving like Jesus?

God not only commands us to love, He enables us to do it. In verse 7 we read, "For love comes from God." The very love that we need to have for one another comes from God. He gives us this through the Holy Spirit. This is unlimited access to all the love we need to have. Unfortunately, many times we would rather stay in our anger and resentment

than access this kind of power. Love was not only displayed by the Son, but it was displayed by the Father in His sacrifice of His Son. This love must lead to practical action. Charles Spurgeon encourages us with these words, "Has anybody offended you? Seek reconciliation. 'Oh, but I am the offended party.' So was God, and he went straight away and sought reconciliation. Brother, do the same. 'Oh, but I have been insulted.' Just so: so was God: all the wrong was towards him, yet he sent. 'Oh, but the party is so unworthy.' So are you; but 'God loved you and sent his Son.'" (Spurgeon)

A few years ago at our church we had an emphasis on giving and stewardship. At the time, I served as Children's minister. We challenged the children to bring toys, games, dolls, etc., and we would give it to needy children in a local ministry. The catch was this—they had to bring their best. They could not purchase it or find it left over in their closet,

forgotten and neglected. We wanted to teach them about sacrifice and the giving of their best for our Savior. With tears streaming down our faces, the children's ministry team stood at the offering table as the children passed by—laying their best on the table. They brought their brand-spanking new Barbies and their treasured Lego sets. They brought their fresh boxed board games and their favorite videos. It was a holy, treasured time. One precious boy, Conner Sanders, gave his very best — his blanket he had slept with since a baby. Conner wanted to give his most loved, precious object to others to reflect His love for Jesus. Let's love like Jesus does, Conner did, by giving up our treasured items, money, time and focus. Let's give our very best for the One we love the most. Thanks, Conner, for a lesson in giving our best.

Bowman is Minister of Connection at First Church, Brandon, and a speaker for women's events.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE Stay True

Jeremiah 35:1-2, 5-8a, 18-19

By Harold Simmons

The revelations that Jeremiah recorded are not necessarily in chronological order. In this section of Jeremiah, it seems as though there are still large numbers of people in Jerusalem who would be coming into the temple to worship and would observe what was happening.

Example of faithfulness (Jeremiah 35:1-2, 5-8a)

God told Jeremiah to go to the Rechabites and invite them to the temple. He was to set wine and cups for them to drink wine. Jeremiah did as God had said. When the Rechabites were in the room in the temple set up for them, Jeremiah commanded them to drink wine. Those invited refused to drink. They then stated their reason for the

refusal. It was against their family tradition to do so. Their ancestor, Rechab, had commanded them not to drink wine and for them not to live in houses nor to plant and harvest. This tradition they kept faithfully. All this was done in the sight and hearing of those who were in the temple.

Jeremiah used the Rechabites as a prime example of faithfulness. God, not man, had commanded His people to be faithful to Him. They were to have no other gods before Him but they were not faithful to that command.

Example of unfaithfulness (Jeremiah 35:12-14)

God pointed again to the faithfulness of the Rechabites who kept the command of a



Simmons

man. He contrasted that with a reminder that He was the Lord of every nation and in particular the Lord of His covenant people Israel. He had the right and authority to speak to them about their relationship with Him. God said that He had spoken to the people again and again but they have not obeyed. The inference here is that a man spoke to his children one time and they faithfully obeyed his command. Whereas, He, God, had spoken several times to His children and they had refused to listen at all.

Consequences of unfaithfulness (Jeremiah 35:17a)

When I was in the fourth grade in school, I had a teacher named Ms. Easter. As she was teaching one day, I began to talk to those around me. She came to my desk and warned me that if I did not stop talking that I would be punished. I didn't stop and

sure enough, she went to her desk and got a ruler and came to me. She took my hand and bent it open, palm up. She proceeded to swat my palm with that ruler. It did not hurt that much but the lesson was clear. You can do what you want to but there will be consequences. That was 63 years ago and I remember that as though it was yesterday. God said to His people: "You can do what you want to do but there will be consequences." He is surely going to bring the disaster upon them that He said He would.

There would be pain and along with that pain would come embarrassment.

Rewards of faithfulness (Jeremiah 35:18-19)

Jeremiah related to the descendants of Jonadab what the Lord had to say to them. In the coming disaster in Judah, they would be spared. They had seen the destruction of the Northern Kingdom and had moved south into Judah. Now they would see destruction but they would be spared

again. The Lord promised them that they would always exist as a family and would be faithful to the Lord.

God speaks across the years to us today through Jeremiah. His message is very clear. He has said to Judah that unless they change, there is judgment coming upon them. If they change, the disaster will be averted. Our way of living is the same as the people of Judah. We have left the worship of the Lord God of Hosts for a myriad of gods of our own making. This action will be just as destructive to us as it was to Judah. The circumstance is vastly different but the consequence will be the same, total destruction of a way of life and of our nation. Sound like doom and gloom? It is. Pray as you never have before for our country and our people. Turn from what you are doing that God does not approve.

Simmons is currently interim pastor at Cascilla Church, Cascilla.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if

submitted as a JPEG file via either (a) e-mail, (b) three-and-a-half inch floppy disk, or (c) CD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

THE BAPTIST
Record

Survey: pastors expect poor economy to affect giving

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Although the offerings in most American churches have met or exceeded budget requirements in 2011, the economy is still having a negative impact on many local congregations.

That's the finding of a LifeWay Research survey of 1,000 Protestant pastors that compared with similar surveys from November 2009 through January 2011.

According to the new survey released Aug. 1, 71% of pastors report 2011 offerings at or in excess of their budget requirements. That includes 25% with offerings exceeding budget requirements and 46% with offerings approximately at budget level. When comparing 2011 offerings to 2010:

- 22% of pastors report lower offerings in 2011.
- 36% say offerings are at about the same level as last year.
- 39% report an increase from 2010.

On average, churches report a two percent increase in 2011.

Churches with larger worship attendance are more likely to have increased offerings. Nearly half (49%) of congregations with 100-249 attendees report increased offerings from 2010, as do 47% of congregations with 250 or more. In comparison, 34% of churches with 50-99 attendees and 23% of those with 0-49 report increased offerings this year.

"Just as there are some positive signs in the U.S. economy, we are seeing more churches with some growth in offerings for 2011," said Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research. "However, average gains are small and not all churches will benefit

depending on their local economy and the overall health of their church."

Pastors identifying themselves as "mainline" (45%) are more likely to have increased offerings than those who identify themselves as "evangelical" (38%).

When asked how the current economy is impacting their churches, a majority of pastors (67%) report negative impact. That includes 58% who say the economy is affecting their church "somewhat negatively" and nine percent who say it is affecting their church "very negatively."

The findings are similar to what pastors said in January 2011 but more negative than their opinions in March 2010, when only 62% said the economy was affecting their congregations negatively.

Ninety-six percent of pastors say their churches have experienced at least one of 11 economy-related changes in the past year, and more than three out of four report at least three of the changes. Among the indicators they report:

- 70% are receiving more requests for financial assistance from outside the congregation.
- 50% say more church members are volunteering time to serve the community.
- 45% have increased spending from the church budget to help the needy.
- 54% report a greater sense of excitement about opportunities to minister to the needy.
- 44% say there is a greater sense of caution within the congregation about the church trying new things that cost money.
- 48% report that more people in the congregation have lost their jobs.

• 49% cite more people volunteering their time in church functions.

• 15% say more people in the congregation have lost their homes to foreclosure.

When it comes to ministry, churches are making do with less. Forty-seven percent of pastors say the economy is forcing their congregations to hold staff salaries at last year's levels. In comparison, 49% said the same in November 2009.

Over the past year and a half, there has been a marked increase in making ministry supplies rather than buying them. While 40% of churches made or did more things themselves instead of buying goods or services in 2009, 49% say they are making and doing more today rather than buying.

In light of the economy churches are also:

- Launching new ministries to help the disadvantaged (26%).
- Delaying construction or other large capital expenses that were planned (15%).
- Delaying hiring that was planned (10%).
- Reducing staff salaries from last year's levels (nine percent).
- Laying off one or more employees (seven percent).

• Reducing insurance benefits for staff (six percent).

"Churches may be past the worst of the effects of the recession, but most continue to take actions to reduce expenses or maintain last year's spending levels," McConnell said. "Pastors' economic assessment has improved since the fall of 2010

but is still worse than their outlook last spring."

The May phone survey involved randomly selected Protestant churches. Each interview was conducted with the senior pastor, minister or priest of the church. The sample involved 1,000 phone interviews.



Marijuana proponents in Ca. again pushing for legalization

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (BP) — Marijuana supporters in California began their next attempt at legalizing recreational use of the drug on July 25, when the secretary of state's office approved the circulation of ballot petitions for their proposition.

Advocates for recreational marijuana must gather 504,760 signatures by Dec. 19 for the initiative to appear on either the June or November ballots next year.

The new movement supported by Steve Kubby, a medical marijuana activist, differs from California's Proposition 19, the previous effort to legalize recreational marijuana that failed to pass in the 2010 midterm elections.

This new push to legalize marijuana contends that people who grow the plant should be treated like vintners (wine makers) and microbrewers

(small-scale beer makers), who are not taxed if they keep the product for themselves.

Under the upcoming proposition, those who sell marijuana would be regulated by the state Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, the Associated Press reported.

Kubby said in the AP report that next year's presidential election provides a better chance for the proposition because it pulls in a broader group of voters as opposed to midterm elections where conservatives are more likely to vote.

Proposition 19 was defeated 54-46%, and liberal and conservative politicians alike joined in rejecting the measure. If Proposition 19 had passed it would have made California the first state to legalize smoking pot recreationally.

Meanwhile, the National Association for the

Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), whose California chapter backed Proposition 19, made another significant move related to the legalization of marijuana. On July 26 the organization called for an end to the so-called war on drugs in what it called a "historic resolution."

The resolution endorses rehabilitation programs and comes after released data that shows African Americans were 13 times more likely to go to jail than whites for the same drug-related offense, the NAACP reported.

"These flawed drug policies that have been mostly enforced in African American communities must be stopped and replaced with evidenced-based practices that address the root causes of drug use and abuse in America," said Benjamin Todd Jealous, president and CEO of the NAACP.

During the Proposition 19 campaign, though, other black leaders said marijuana legalization would harm the black community. Ron Allen, who is president of the International Faith-Based Coalition and is African American, said the legalization of marijuana would hurt blacks.

"How in the world can we legalize a drug and say, 'Let everyone stay high' and believe they're not going to get arrested for something else?" Allen asked regarding the legalization of recreational marijuana. "It will cause more carnage, more devastation, more crime, more burglary in that community or in any other community. It doesn't make sense. How can you educate an intoxicated mind? You can't."

Allen added, "If Martin Luther King could hear something like that, he would turn

over in his grave, knowing that our greatest civil rights organization is talking about legalizing a drug and calling that civil rights."

The proponents for the new effort to legalize marijuana include Kubby, who helped write the 1996 medical marijuana law; James Gray, Orange County Superior Court judge; and William McPike, a Fresno-area attorney.

McPike represented Kubby while he fought drug charges for his possession of a psychedelic mushroom and the hallucinogen drug mescaline.

Currently, the possession of up to one ounce of marijuana is only a minor infraction in California.

That law, signed by former Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, makes the punishment for possession the equivalent of a speeding ticket.